

Relevance of Writings and Speeches of Vivekananda's in Modern World

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Introduction

Swami Vivekananda was not only a saint or yogi or a monk or a spiritualist or a vedantic philosopher of great rank but he was also a great man of letters in the field of oration and speech. He has great gift of deliberation and his arguments always are reflected in his speeches which he delivered all around the world. He showed great perfection in his articulation and always maintained a great height as far as his words about his spiritual experienced are concerned. When he became the disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ramakrishna made a perfect prophesy about his future. He said that this boy Narendra will become a great representative of Indian philosophy and spiritualism one day. When Vivekananda stood to deliver his lecture in the World Parliament of Religion in Chicago, it created a clamour among the audience and nearly seven to eight thousand people present in the hall suddenly stood from their seat to welcome a young yogi who spoke his first words, "Sister's and brothers of America".

These words attracted the entire mass present in the hall because such kind of connectivity is not visible in the western society. In India, there is great respect for every religion and people are very tolerant and show great respect and honour for the fellow people belonging to different religions. In the World Parliament of Religion in Chicago in 1893 there were a large number of speakers who delivered their lectures on different topics but they failed to show any kind of connectivity with the audience. But Vivekananda, a man from Indian soil came up and grabbed the attention of the people by his opening lines of his famous speech. Mrs. S.K. Blodgett

who was the hostess of Swami Vivekananda in Los Angeles, remarked about his speech, specially the reaction of the audience after his few words:

“I was in the Parliament of Religion in Chicago in 1893. When a young man got up and said sisters and brothers of America, seven thousand people rose of their feet as a tribute to something they knew not about. When it was over, I saw scores of women walking over the benches to get near him. And I said to myself, well my lad if you can resist the onslaught you are indeed a God”.

In that famous speech Swami Vivekananda did not advocate any particular religion or faith or way of life or persuade people to follow one unanimous faith in their life. He believed in the fact that each and every human being is destined to follow their separate religion and faith but there must be tolerance and respect for each and every religion. There must be liberty in thoughts and way of life and there should not be imposition of any religion to the people who did not like or ready to adopt. That is view of Vivekananda which was spread in that famous speech. The primary concern of his speech was to show the great power of Hinduism to the world in which each and every religion of this world finds a place. He said that he did not want people to become Christian or to become Hindus or to become Buddhist or to become Muslim. They must remain their own religion and they must follow their own paths but they must show respect for the people who belonged to different religions or believes or faiths. For instance, at one place in his speech he remarked:

“The Christian is not become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor is a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to own law of growth”.

His entire speech in the Parliament of Religion was about the tolerance, harmony and peace in the world. He was of the view that nobody can survive in this without showing respect to other religions. The dream of the people can only be achieved if there is sense of charity, purity and holiness in the minds of the people and these things can be found in each and every religion. The motto of his speech was, “assimilation and not destruction,” and “harmony and peace and not dissension.” Vivekananda’s view on different religions was extremely pure

and it has the sense of appreciation. He did not show any kind of inclination towards any particular religion. He was of the view that every religion of this world is directed towards the welfare of the society and if this sense is not prevailed in the religion, there is no question of spirituality in the world. He condemned the false Christianity and did not like to be confused about religions hypocrisy of different Christian leaders. He often showed his anger towards such false assumptions which often dilute the thoughts. He often told the importance of Hindu way of life. He said that in Hinduism there is often scope appreciation and assimilation. Hinduism never discards anyone. In his one of the lectures he said: "Hindu is mild, he smiles and passes on, saying lead the fools talk."

These words indicate the American world about the power of Hinduism to the world. He advocated orientalism for the different purpose. He was of the view that Indian *Vedas* and *Upanishads* have much more to tell the world how life could be spent in the era of great migration from ethos to materialistic perception. The prosperity of the world is not in the advancement of scientific tools or many discoveries, but it must lie in the advancement of the spirit of human beings who might realize the most fundamental concept of spirituality. Swami Vivekananda was highly critical about the fall notion of all the religions of the world. He was highly critical about the hypocrisy existence in the attitude of the preachers who are doing nothing in the welfare of the nothing. He thought the basic aim of the religion is to guide the people in right direction and people must be satisfied by the preachers. He would like to tell people that there must be essence of spiritual and intellectual accomplishment in human thoughts. The prosperity in the world can be brought by the sense of betterness and essence of welfare.

Some people on those days also criticize Swami Vivekananda that he was an orthodox Hindu. People accused him because of Hinduism. But they failed to recognize the real essence of Vivekananda's teachings. He said that he was not a man of single caste or did not believe in any particular religion. His mind was not narrow but he was totally against the castist society and people must acknowledge the universe tone and temper of Hinduism. In his speech, he said boldly before the intellectuals:

“Do you mean to say I am born to live and die as one of those castes- ridden, superstitious, merciless, hypocritical, atheistic, cowards that you only find among the educated Hindus? I hate cowardice. I will have nothing to do have cowards. I belong to world as much as to India, no humbug that, what country has a special claim on me? Am I a nation’s slave? I see a greater power than man or God or Devil at my back. I require nobodies help. I have been all my life helping others”.

Swami Vivekananda had great appreciation for the poet Walt Whitman and he called him real Sanyasi of America. Vivekananda had gone through the famous poem ‘Leave of Grass’ composed by Walt Whitman which presents the real identity of human being in the vast context of society. This poem presents the whole of America in one song. Vivekananda liked Walt Whitman’s another poem ‘Song of the Open Road’ which is full of the emotions and sentiments of the common people which was also the subject matters of Vivekananda’s mission. Vivekananda’s love of Walt Whitman is quite natural because it helped him to understand the problems of American people in detail. Vivekananda loved to sing these lines of Walt Whitman’s poem Song for the Open Road:

“I inhale great droughts of space the east and the west are mine and the north and the south are mine. I am larger, better than I thought, I did not know I held so much goodness. Alones! We must not stop here”.

Vivekananda’s appreciation of Walt Whitman indicates the point that Vivekananda is not in favour of aristocratic society, he was in favour of the welfare of common people and would like to present the life and rhythm of common people. Walt Whitman was the poet of the Americans and it is the beauty of his poems that each and every poem deals with common people. Common people seem to be the real subject matter of Walt Whitman as well as Vivekananda. Here it will be appropriate to quote few lines of Walt Whitman:

“Let the school stand!

Mind not the cry of the teacher!

Let the preacher preach in the pulpit! Let the lawyers plead in the court, And the judge expound the law”.

Vivekananda in America told the people that any society could not progress until and unless the condition of the women is developed. Women form the half of the entire population of the world but still they are in the margin. They must play their role could not be minimize at all. Women are the representative of Mother Kali, Mother Durga, Mother Saraswati and Mother Laxmi. Only women have power to beget the child. Women are the symbol of kindness, tenderness, and selfless love and affection. Vivekananda also reminded the people that when he wandering alone, it was women who called him and provide lodging and food without knowing him much. Vivekananda has great love and respect for woman. He always remembered his own mother and Sharda Devi who was the wife of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He was of the view that it is women bestow love and affection to all people because of her kind-heartedness. He wrote to Maharaja of Khetri in 1894 in one of his letters:

“American women! a hundred lives would not be sufficient to my deep debt gratitude to you! Last year I came to this country in summer, a wandering preacher of a far distant country, without name, fame, wealth, or learning to recommend me—friendless, helpless, almost in a state of destitution, and American women be friended me, gave me shelter and food, took me to their homes, and treated me as their own son, their own brother”.

Swami Vivekananda was too much concerned with the pathetic lot of women in India. He founds the difference between the east and the west regarding the condition of women. He had some bitter experience regarding the ill and pathetic condition of women in general. He would like to tell people that in India people do not pay much respect to women and such condition of women is only because of that. He remembered how one of his own sisters committed suicide. He blamed orthodox Hindu society responsible for that. Swami Vivekananda was so engaged in the pathetic condition of women that he sent money earned by his lectures to a foundation of a Hindu widows at Baranagore. He was in favour intellectual regeneration of Indian women.

It is the belief of the scholar that Vivekananda that not only concerned with religion and spiritual journey of human being, not only interested intellectual regeneration of the women,

not only interested to uplift the divine quality of human beings, but at the same time would like to throw light of different issues—economic issue, industrialization, future of India, political havoc in Indian subcontinent, British exploitation, loss of faith of common people, spiritual and moral degradation of the people also. He would like to bring dignity to human beings in the real sense of the term. He appreciated the basic fundamentals of American culture and trying to bring in his concept also. Unlike India, American culture has not any sense of antiquity, it is quite new as compared to Indian culture. But he noticed a sense of practical approach in India. In one of his speeches, he remarks:

“No religion on Earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on Earth treats upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism. Religion is not at fault”.

Vivekananda was also conscious about the problems created by the caste system in India. He believed that Indian society suffered because of too much caste consciousness. Even though his own state Bengal is the source of renaissance but he would like to criticize that in this respect Hinduism failed to provide any solution to that burning problem. He was of the view that if the country like India does not come out from cobweb of the caste system; country will not progress at all. He was also of the view that there will not be cultural regeneration in India possible until and unless we are able to break nutshell of the caste prejudice.

According to Vivekananda every human being is divine in nature. We could not understand these on account of ignorance or clouds of incompetence. If there is realm of consciousness, everyone may pass that phase of ignorance or incompetence. The entire universe is the symbol of progress and religion only tells the history of human beings in the vast realm of journey. All the Vedas and Upanishads tell the story of the relationship between body and soul. Soul exists in human body and soul could not be identified in the section of caste or religion imperfection. In India society has been divided on account of religion, caste and creed but no one can say that without social reforms these things can happen.

Vivekananda appreciates Hinduism because it is the beautiful combination of contradictory or opposite things. India is a country of Gods and Goddesses. There is always

controversy regarding the composers of *Upanishads* or *Vedas* or any rituals mentioned in *Puranas*. But everybody in India reads these *Shastras*, *Sutras* and the philosophy of *Gita* for getting spiritual and intellectual knowledge. These *Shastras* and *Sutras* are not designed to criticize anything but to appreciate both fare and fall.

Vivekananda's mission in abroad was to display the wonders of Indian philosophy, especially Indian spirituality among the foreigners. He taught them how India was the country of golden chirping birds. He all the time thought about the fact that only cultural, spiritual, moral and intellectual regeneration can uplift the morale of the people and it would also make them patriot enough to free their country not only from the political or geographical slavery, but also from mental, spiritual and intellectual slavery.

Conclusion:

Vivekananda was a versatile genius. If people consider him only as preacher of Vedantic philosophy, it will be not appropriate. It will be appropriate to call him real mentor in India who shows the world Indian way of life or Indian religion or Indian philosophy or Indian spirituality as the only way to bring universal peace and brotherhood. Since he was the ardent follower of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, it will be appropriate for us to recognize him as an incarnation of the intellect and the representative of the spirit who would like to save India in the crunch moment. He believes that India can only be saved by the Indians. Indian philosophy of life, Indian appreciation of life, Indian festival, Indian piousness—everything in India is enough to save the country and guide the people in the right direction. It will be appropriate for us to understand the philosophy of Vivekananda in our professional and everyday life. He had great concept of nationhood but his concept of nationhood doesn't harm other nations of the world. He would like to be remembered as a man who was free from the bondage and chain of this world and he merged in divinity is also symbolic. He prepared the platform for the youth to carry the responsibility of the nation building on their shoulder. His teachings and preaching are not against anyone but for everyone. In one of his letters, he writes:

“Leave me, throw me quite out of sight. Preach the new ideal, and new doctrine, the new life. Preach against nobody, against no custom. Preach neither for nor against caste or any other social evil. Preach to let hands of, and everything will come right”.

Thus the wittings and speeches of Vivekananda are directed towards human values and these are the words of real yogi and philosopher who would like to see not only Indians but the entire world in new perspective where there is no suffering and people live together and love everything. His words are the words of greater values and his every word or every sentence is designed to bring cultural, moral, spiritual, intellectual and philosophical regeneration in India.

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